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WASHINGTON TALK

Briefing

The 'Jugular' Newsletter

Washington is awash with newsletters. Hundreds of them scrutinize the minutiae of Government affairs for clients in industry and for subscribers interested in almost everything from air pollution to tax havens. And now there is "Early Warning," a \$1,000-a-year monthly newsletter for "key decision-makers" who want to know about "matters of jugular concern."

Everything about the nine-month-old venture carries hush-hush overtones. "Personal and confidential" is written on mass-distribution letters recently sent to solicit subscribers. On this basis, it is not surprising that Arnaud de Borchgrave, one of the publishers and writers, said the newsletter itself was "ultraconfidential." According to Mr. de Borchgrave, this means that if you subscribe, you should not make copies on the office copying machine.

The newsletter is published by Mid-Atlantic Research Associates, consisting of Mr. de Borchgrave, former chief foreign correspondent for Newsweek; John Rees, who publishes Information Digest, another newsletter, and Robert Moss, a former editor at The Economist.

"Early Warning" promises to scoop the daily news media on domestic and foreign news, as seen through the eyes of "former intelligence officers, including ranking defectors from the K.G.B. and its proxy services and former government officials recently in sensitive positions." Mr. de Borchgrave said he recently offered early warnings on such things as Libya's troop buildup before its invasion of Chad and a currency devaluation in Venezuela.

"After studying our track record," Mr. De Borchgrave wrote to potential subscribers, "Bill Casey of the C.I.A. took several subscriptions."

William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, is on vacation, but Dale Peterson, an agency spokesman, said that no copies of the newsletter had arrived in the director's office, although he said Mr. Casey could be receiving them at home.

Mr. Peterson said he was not familiar with "Early Warning," but that even if he were, he would not be able to comment on its contents.

The Report on Reports

After writing legislation, Congress has to know how it works in the real world. Consequently, many laws require Government agencies to make reports on enforcement status, on significant mistakes, on plans to spend large hunks of money and even reports on reports.

The Clerk of the House recently filed a report listing about 3,000 mandatory reports. The General Accounting Office, which regularly reports on wasteful reporting, knows of a couple thousand other reports, which, altogether, cost more than \$80 million a year to produce.

"I like the report the C.I.A. has to write whenever they off someone," said Dan Buck, an aide to Representative Patricia Schroeder and an avid reader of the House Clerk's report on reports. He was referring to a State Department report entitled, "Illegal intelligence activity; significant intelligence failure; corrective action."

Some reports are theoretically available to the public, but it requires dogged research, starting at the House Documents Room. Most reports, however, are deemed confidential.

A sampling: "Certain expenses of the President and Vice President," "Audit of the House Beauty Shop," "Advance report on proposed military or paramilitary operations in Angola," "Americans incarcerated abroad," "Audits of undercover operations," "Means of preserving and conserving intangible elements of the nation's cultural heritage," "Failure to compile a role of members of tribe who possess Kickapoo blood," "Activities of the Gold Star Wives of America," "Annual report of Little League Baseball," "Summary and review of the continuing study of rape," "Efforts to reduce paperwork and reporting."

Periodically, Congress passes a law to toss out some of the less useful studies. Recent cuts from the annual publication list include \$7,000 worth of reports on the Tule Elk herd in California and \$5 million worth of reports on Federal employee training programs.

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